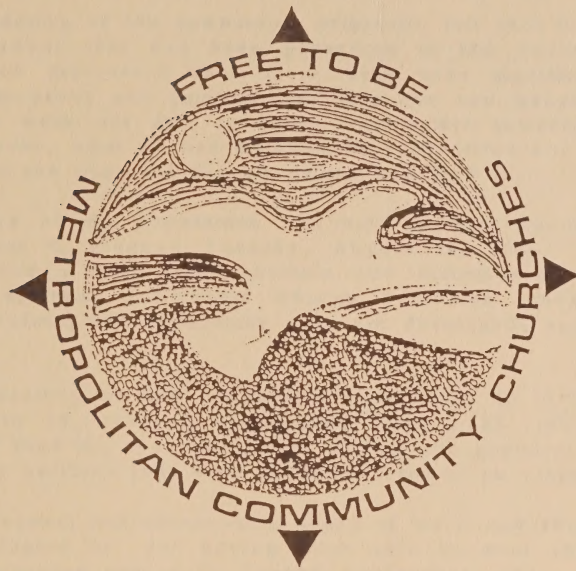


REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS



The Universal Fellowship

of

Metropolitan Community Churches

General Conference 12

June 30 - July 7, 1985

Sacramento, California

REPORT TO GENERAL CONFERENCE XII
THE COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS

In the Fall of 1983, I traveled to California, attending the Western Clergy Conference in San Diego, and meeting with the Board of Elders in Los Angeles. Combining this initial grass roots feed-in with the information on the tapes of General Conference business meeting discussions, I called the first meeting of the entire commission for Thursday, March 15, through Monday, March 19, 1984, just prior to the Clergy Conference in Kansas City, Kansas.

Although that meeting of the commission originally felt that it would be best to rework the document that had been presented to the General Conference in Toronto, we soon discovered that there were some significant changes that needed to be discussed and incorporated into the new proposal. Due to the lack of time we were not able to finish a complete reworking of the entire document. However, what we had finished we reproduced and began to process of sending out to the churches for discussion and feed in.

The next meeting of the commission was held in Fort Lauderdale, Texas on Thursday, August 9, through Tuesday, August 14, 1984. At that time the commission finished a first draft revision and distributed it once again for congregational, district, and World Church Extension study. Although the proposal was complete, the appendices were not developed, again due to lack of time.

The final full meeting of the commission took place in Orlando, Florida on Saturday, January 19, through Wednesday, January 23, 1985. Based on the second round of feed-in, the commission revised the proposal and finished the other explanatory sections that were appended (not to be voted on.)

The following proposal represents long hours of work and thousands of dollars in cost. I apologize for not having been able to meet the time scheduled outlined in the motioned passed by General Conference, 1983. In order to keep the expenses to a minimum meetings had to be held at times that did not allow for distribution of the material generated as specified in the General Conference motion. However, the process of work that is prepared, studied, responded to, and then reworked proved to be most successful and hopefully will serve as a pattern for other work to be accomplished in the Fellowship. We must realize that as we grow in size and programs we will not always be able to complete tasks set before us in a period of only two (2) years.

Although there was constant change in the membership of the commission, the attendance at the three (3) meetings approached sixty-six (66%) percent of the total number of people serving on the commission. I wish to thank and congratulate the entire commission for the fine piece of work that they have produced.

Appreciation is also due to every M.C.C. member and friend who took the time and interest to read, discuss, and respond to the G.S.S. process as outlined above. Your "homework" will definitely pay off on the floor of General Conference as we discuss and vote on this proposal.

Respectfully submitted,
Reverend John W. Gill, Chairperson

ARTICLE V - GOVERNMENT, ORGANIZATION, AND OFFICERS

A. Government

1. This Fellowship acknowledges the Holy Scripture interpreted by the Holy Spirit in conscience and faith as its guide in faith, discipline, and government.
2. The government of this Fellowship is vested in the General Conference, its District Conferences, and Congregational Meetings, subject to the provisions of the Fellowship Articles of Incorporation and its By-Laws, or documents of legal organization. The officers elected by the General and District Conferences and Congregational Meetings are subject to the direction and discipline of their respective bodies and are responsible to carry out their policies.
3. This Fellowship is accountable to no outside ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but accepts the obligation of mutual consent and cooperation involved in the free fellowship of other churches, and does pledge itself to share in their common aims and endeavors subject to the expressed approval of its membership.
4. Local Churches, Districts, District Conferences, and the General Conference as defined by these By-Laws, are set forth for the purposes of Christian Fellowship, Worship, Witness, and Service, borne in the cooperation, program development, and implementation of their By-Laws, Standard Operating Procedures, and Policies.
5. A local church in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) is that church which subscribes to the government and doctrine of the UFMCC and has been authorized by the same.

ARTICLE V
GOVERNMENT, ORGANIZATION AND OFFICERS

A. GOVERNMENT:

1. This Fellowship acknowledges the Holy Scriptures interpreted by the Holy Spirit in conscience and faith as its guide in faith, discipline and government.
2. The government of this Fellowship is vested in its elders, clergy and church delegates, who exert the right of control in all of its affairs, subject to the provisions of its Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws.
3. This Fellowship is amenable to no outside ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but accepts the obligation of mutual consent, comity and cooperation involved in the free fellowship of other churches, and does pledge itself to share in their common aims and endeavors subject to the expressed approval of its membership.
4. Geographical Districts and District Conferences, as defined by these By-Laws, are set forth for the sole purposes of Christian fellowship, mutual cooperation and other objectives as set forth in these By-Laws.
5. A local church of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is that church which subscribes to the government and doctrine of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, and has been chartered by the same, and is listed in the minutes of the General Conference.
6. The government of the local chartered churches in the Fellowship is vested in its members who exert the right to control all of its affairs, subject to the provisions of its Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws, and those of the General Conference of the Fellowship. The local chartered church is amenable only to its membership and the By-Laws of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

27 B. Local Commissioned and Chartered Churches

- 28 1. Introduction: The government of each of the local churches is vested
29 in its congregational meetings which exert the right to control all
30 of its affairs, subject to the provisions of the UFMCC Articles of
31 Incorporation, By-Laws, or documents of legal organization, the
32 General Conference, and its District Conferences. The Pastor and
33 Board of Directors/local church administrative body are authorized
34 to provide spiritual and administrative leadership in the local
35 church.
- 36 2. Pastor: The Pastor is that person elected by a local church congrega-
37 tion to perform duties of teacher, preacher, spiritual leader, and
38 counselor. The pastor of a commissioned church must be approved by
39 the District Coordinator and the District Committee/Coordinator of
40 Church Extension.
- 41 a. Qualifications and Duties: Pastors must be credentialed clergy in
42 the UFMCC unless an exception is made by the District Committee/
43 Board of World Church Extension. The Pastor of the church shall
44 have the authority for ordering all worship services of the church.
45 The Pastor is a voting member of the Board of Directors/local church
46 administrative body. The Pastor shall serve as the moderator of
47 congregational meetings and may serve as the moderator of the Board
48 of Directors/local church administrative body in accordance with
49 local By-Laws, Standard Operating Procedures, or documents of legal
50 organization. Associate and/or Assistant Pastor(s) and other per-
51 sonnel, uncompensated or compensated, shall be appointed by the
52 Pastor subject to the approval of the Board of Directors/local
53 church administrative body. The Pastor shall act as personnel
54 director of the local church staff, shall have the authority to
55 delegate such responsibilities and duties as seem wise, and shall,
56 with the approval of the Board of Directors/local church adminis-
57 trative body, determine compensation, vacation periods, and titles
58 of office of the staff.

6. The government of the local chartered churches in the Fellowship is

vested in its members who exert the right to control all of its affairs, subject to the provisions of its Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws, and those of the General Conference of the Fellowship. The local chartered church is amenable only to its membership and the By-Laws of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

D. LOCAL CHURCH BODIES:

1. PASTOR: The pastor is that person elected by a local church congregation to perform the duties of teacher, preacher, spiritual leader and counselor. The person filling this position must be a licensed or ordained clergyperson in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. The pastor of the church body shall have the authority for ordering all religious worship services of the church. The pastor is also to serve as moderator of the local Board of Directors. He/She may participate as an ex-officio member in the activities of any or all of the boards, committees and organizations within the local church. The pastor shall act as moderator of congregational business meetings. Associate or assistant pastors, other ministerial personnel, uncompensated and compensated personnel shall be appointed by the pastor subject to the approval of the Board of Directors. The pastor shall act as personnel director of the local church staff, shall have the authority to delegate such responsibilities and duties as to him/her seem wise, and shall, with the approval of the Board of Directors, determine compensation, vacation periods and titles of office of the staff.

Pastors may be removed from office only for good and sufficient reasons by majority vote of the congregation at any special meeting called for that purpose by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the full Board of Directors, or by petition to the Clerk or other officer of the Board of Directors by at least 25% of the members in good standing of the congregation. The pastor must be given written notice of the charges within two (2) weeks. At that time the Pastor goes on inactive status but remains fully compensated until final action by the congregation. The pastor has the right to appear on his/her behalf before a congregational meeting. The action of the congregation is final. If a special meeting is called to remove a pastor, the District Coordinator and the Board of Elders must be given notice that such action is being taken. The District Coordinator, in conjunction with the Board of Elders, must send a representative to attend said meeting as an impartial observer. If the pastor is removed the Board of Directors will meet immediately after the meeting with the representative of the District Coordinator and Board of Elders to elect a worship coordinator who will serve until the pulpit is filled. The Board of Directors will confer with the District Coordinator and the Board of Elders of the Fellowship as to available candidates for the office of pastor.

b. Termination of Service

- 1.) When irreconcilable differences arise between Pastor and congregation, they may through mutual agreement choose to terminate their relationship.
- 2.) The Pastor may be removed from office for disloyalty, unbecoming conduct, dereliction of duty or when irreconcilable differences arise between Pastor and congregation by petition submitted to the duly authorized church officer as designated by the local By-Laws/Standard Operating Procedures, or documents of legal organization, and signed by at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the members in good standing, or by other means which are in accordance with local By-Laws/Standard Operating Procedures, or documents of legal organization. Within three (3) days, the Pastor and the District Coordinator/Coordinator of Church Extension and World Church Extension Elder must be sent a copy of the completed petition by the designated church officer. After the District Coordinator/Coordinator of Church Extension and designated local church officer have validated the number of members who have signed the petition and the clarity of the petition, the District Coordinator/Coordinator of Church Extension may place the Pastor on inactive status, but the Pastor remains fully compensated until the final action of the congregation. Upon validating the petition they will set the time and place of a special congregational meeting. The date of the meeting shall occur within thirty (30) days of the date the petition is submitted to the designated church officer. The only question to be voted at the meeting shall be: "Shall the Pastor be removed from office?" The Pastor has the right to appear on their own behalf before the congregational meeting. The action of the congregation is final. If a special meeting is called to remove a Pastor, the District Coordinator/Coordinator of Church Extension and the UFMCC Board of Elders must be given notice that such action is being taken. The District Coordinator/Coordinator of Church Extension shall attend or send a representative as an impartial observer who shall moderate the meeting. If the Pastor is removed, the Board of Directors/local church administrative body will meet immediately after the meeting with the District Coordinator/Coordinator of Church Extension or the representative to provide pastoral leadership until the pulpit is filled. The Board of Directors/local church administrative body will confer with the District Coordinator/Coordinator of Church Extension as to available candidates for the office of Pastor.

1. PASTOR: The pastor is that person elected by a local church congregation to perform the duties of teacher, preacher, spiritual leader and counselor. The person filling this position must be a licensed or ordained clergy person in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. The pastor of the church body shall have the authority for ordering all religious worship services of the church. The pastor is also to serve as moderator of the local Board of Directors. He/She may participate as an ex-officio member in the activities of any or all of the boards, committees and organizations within the local church. The pastor shall act as moderator of congregational business meetings. Associate or assistant pastors, other ministerial personnel, uncompensated and compensated personnel shall be appointed by the pastor subject to the approval of the Board of Directors. The pastor shall act as personnel director of the local church staff, shall have the authority to delegate such responsibilities and duties as to him/her seem wise, and shall, with the approval of the Board of Directors, determine compensation, vacation periods and titles of office of the staff.

Pastors may be removed from office only for good and sufficient reasons by majority vote of the congregation at any special meeting called for that purpose by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the full Board of Directors, or by petition to the Clerk or other officer of the Board of Directors by at least 25% of the members in good standing of the congregation. The pastor must be given written notice of the charges within two (2) weeks. At that time the Pastor goes on inactive status but remains fully compensated until final action by the congregation. The pastor has the right to appear on his/her behalf before a congregational meeting. The action of the congregation is final. If a special meeting is called to remove a pastor, the District Coordinator and the Board of Elders must be given notice that such action is being taken. The District Coordinator, in conjunction with the Board of Elders, must send a representative to attend said meeting as an impartial observer. If the pastor is removed the Board of Directors will meet immediately after the meeting with the representative of the District Coordinator and Board of Elders to elect a worship coordinator who will serve until the pulpit is filled. The Board of Directors will confer with the District Coordinator and the Board of Elders of the Fellowship as to available candidates for the office of pastor.

3. Board of Directors/Local Church Administrative Body

- a. Term of Office: The Board of Directors/local church administrative body elected by the local church shall consist of at least four (4) members of the local church who are in good standing, in addition to the Pastor. They shall hold office for a term of from one year to three years as determined by local By-Laws/Standard Operating Procedures with the exception of the Pastor who will hold office for as long as they occupy the pulpit of the church. Board of Directors/local church administrative body members' terms must be staggered. In the event of the resignation, death, or removal of a Board of Directors/local church administrative body member, the remaining members of the Board of Directors/local church administrative body should appoint an interim Board of Directors/local church administrative body member to serve until the next congregational meeting. At the next congregational meeting an open election shall be held for a replacement for the remainder of the original term.
- b. Duties: The Board of Directors/local church administrative body shall have charge of all matters pertaining to the Articles of Incorporation or documents of legal organization, church property, and physical and financial affairs of the local church. This Board of Directors/local church administrative body shall have the responsibility for collecting and disbursing funds, keeping adequate church records, and making reports to the local congregation and through the District to the UFMCC. The Board of Directors/local church administrative body shall serve as a pastoral search committee upon the event of a pastoral vacancy. For the purpose of its function as a pastoral search committee, additional voting members may be appointed or elected as appropriate. When they have chosen a suitable qualified candidate they shall present the name to the congregation for approval at a specially called meeting or at the next regular congregational meeting. Every local church financial account is required to have a minimum of two (2) signatories, who are chosen by the Board of Directors/local church administrative body. Two (2) signatures will be required for any withdrawals. It is incumbent upon the Board of Directors/local church administrative body of each local church to provide that church with a set of By-Laws or Standard Operating Procedures.
- c. Discipline: Local churches of the UFMCC must not condone disloyalty, unbecoming conduct, or dereliction of duty on the part of any members of the Board of Directors/local church administrative body; therefore the Board of Directors/local church administrative body may remove, by a majority vote of the full Board of Directors/local church administrative body, any of its members guilty of the above, with the exception of the Pastor, who must be disciplined in accordance with Article V.B.2.b.1. and 2. A petition presented to the Board of Directors/local church administrative body and signed by twenty-five (25) percent of the members in good standing of the congregation, may also initiate such a procedure. This action of the Board of Directors/local church administrative body may be subject to review by a vote of the congregation at its next regular congregational meeting or at a special meeting which may be called, and must be in accordance with the provisions of the By-Laws of this Fellowship and the By-Laws of the local church.
- d. Accountability: The Board of Directors/local church administrative body shall be subject to these By-Laws, local Articles of Incorporation, and local By-Laws/Standard Operating Procedures, and to the approval or disapproval by action of their local congregation as provided for in any of the above.

2. BOARD OF DIRECTORS: The Board of Directors elected by the local church body shall consist of from five (5) to nine (9) members of the local church who are in good standing; they shall hold office for a term of three (3) years with the exception of the pastor who will hold office for as long as he/she occupies the pulpit of that church. The term of one-third of the members of the board shall expire each year and other members shall be elected to fill the vacancies thus created. In the event of the resignation or death or removal of a board member, the remaining members of the board shall appoint an interim board member to serve until the next congregational meeting when an open election shall be held for a replacement for the remainder of the original term.

The Board of Directors shall have charge of all matters pertaining to the Articles of Incorporation, church property, finances and physical affairs of the local church body. This board shall have the responsibility of collecting and disbursing funds, keeping adequate church records, and making reports thereof to the local congregation and through their district to the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. The Board of Directors shall serve as pulpit committee upon the event of any pastoral vacancy. When they have chosen suitable qualified candidates the Board shall present them to the congregation for approval at a specially called meeting or at the next regular business meeting. Every local church financial account is required to have a minimum of two (2) signatures which shall be the Treasurer, and 1) another Board member, or 2) the pastor.

Local churches of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches must not condone disloyalty or unbecoming conduct on the part of any member of the Board of Directors, therefore, the Board may remove, by a majority vote of the full board, any of their

members guilty of the above. A petition presented to the board and signed by 20% of the members in good standing may also initiate such procedure. This action of the Board of Directors may be subject to review by a vote of the congregation at its next regular business meeting or at a special meeting which may be called and must be in accordance with the provisions of the By-Laws of this Fellowship and the By-Laws of the local church.

The Board of Directors shall be subject to these By-Laws, local Articles of Incorporation, or local By-Laws, if such exist, and to the approval or disapproval by action of their local congregation as provided for in any of the above. It is incumbent upon the Board of Directors of each local church to provide that church with a set of By-Laws or Standard Operating Procedures.

3. Any specific matters of congregational approval or appeal not covered herein are left to the local church option.

- 163 4. Lay Delegate: Each voting church body shall have one (1) vote
164 for every twenty-five (25) members in good standing or portion
165 thereof and shall elect at least one (1) members in good standing
166 as a lay delegate. Each lay delegate shall carry at least one
167 (1) vote but no more than four (4) votes. Each voting church
168 body shall determine the number of lay delegates to represent
169 the number of votes the church body represents. These delegates
170 should be elected at the first congregational meeting following
171 each General Conference and shall serve for a term of two (2)
172 years. The duties of the lay delegate shall include, but not be
173 limited to representation of the congregation at General and
174 District Conferences and to be informed of the UFMCC-concerns
175 and policies.

ARTICLE IX
CHURCH MEETINGS

A. FELLOWSHIP: For the purpose of the transaction of business the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches will hold a Biennial General Conference beginning in 1977. The time and place of this conference will preferably be determined and announced at the previous General Conference. Notice must be given in writing to all churches and missions ninety (90) days prior to the upcoming General Conference. This General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is that body consisting of all licensed clergy, ordained clergy, elders and lay delegates. Each local church must elect one lay delegate for each one hundred (100) members or portion thereof, that it carries on its roll of members in good standing, and each mission must elect one lay delegate, and each study group may send one official observer with voice but no vote. The transaction of all business except procedural matters must be approved by a separate majority vote of the lay delegates and a separate majority vote of the licensed clergy, ordained clergy and elders. A quorum shall consist of a number of lay delegates equal to at least sixty-six percent (66%) of the total number of lay delegates eligible to attend from churches within the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches and sixty-six percent (66%) of the clergy delegates to the General Conference. No proxy and/or absentee ballots shall be allowed in any business session of this Fellowship: inclusive of General Conference, district business meetings, and local congregational meetings.

All special conferences of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches can only be called by a petition submitted to the Board of

- 176 5. Discipline of Churches: If any local voting church body shall
177 fail to abide by the Articles of Incorporation of the UFMCC, these
178 By-Laws, or documents of legal organization, or refuses to par-
179 ticipate in General or District Conferences, the General Council
180 shall take appropriate action to require compliance and partici-
181 pation. The General Council shall have the authority to withdraw
182 the commission, revoke the charter, or take other appropriate
183 action, and shall report any such action to the District Commit-
184 tee/Board of World Church Extension, and the church involved. The
185 action will also be reported to the next General Conference.
- 186 6. Church Property: The Board of Directors/local church administrative
187 body of the local congregation of the UFMCC will name the Board(s)
188 of Trustees for any property acquired by said churches. The Board
189 of Directors/local church administrative body, and the members
190 of each local congregation will have sole control of said property
191 except under the following circumstances: (1) if the property is
192 abandoned; (2) if the local church is disbanded by the Board of
193 Directors/local church administrative body and the District Com-
194 mittee or Conference, or the General Council. Should any of the
195 above circumstances exist, said property will revert to the use
196 of the General Conference of the UFMCC, which will decide the
197 disposition of said property. In every nation where UFMCC comes
198 to exist a paragraph modeled on the following must be included
199 in their document of legal organization and must apply: "Local
200 churches which are now incorporated or which become incorporated
201 in the United States as non-profit corporations under their state
202 laws are required to name the UFMCC as the successor 501 (C) (3)
203 corporation designated to receive the church's property in the
204 event of the dissolution or abandonment of that incorporated local
205 church."
- 206 7. Reservation of Powers: Any specific matters of congregational
207 approval not covered herein, are left to local church option.

F. DISCIPLINE: If any local church body [mission or church] shall fail to abide by the Articles of Incorporation or these By-Laws, or refuses to participate in the General Conference of the Fellowship, the Board of Elders shall take appropriate action to require compliance and participation. The Board of Elders shall report any such action to the next meeting of the General Conference which shall have the power to withdraw the recognition of missions, revoke the charter of churches, or take other appropriate action.

Study groups failing to comply with the Articles of Incorporation or the By-Laws of the Fellowship may be dissolved by the proper Fellowship board or the District Coordinator with the approval of the District Board of Home Missions. Such action must be reported to the Board of Elders and entered into the minutes of the next General Conference.

G. CHURCH PROPERTIES: The Boards of Directors of the local congregations of this fellowship will act as the Boards of Trustees for any property purchased by said groups. The Board of Directors and the members of each local congregation will have sole control of said property except under the following circumstances: 1) if the property is abandoned, 2) if the local church is disbanded by action of the local Board of Directors and the District Board of Home Missions. Should any of the above circumstances exist said property will revert to use of the General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches which will decide the disposition of the said property.

Local church bodies which are now incorporated or which become incorporated as non-profit corporations under their state laws shall be required to name the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches as the successor 501 (C) (3) corporation designated to receive that church's property, in the event of the dissolution or abandonment of that incorporated local church body.

3. Any specific matters of congregational approval or appeal not covered herein are left to the local church option.

C. Districts

1. Introduction: Districts are those defined bodies which are created by the General Council. They are called into existence to enable and empower Christian ministry within their jurisdiction through their member congregations and bodies. District Conferences are legislative gatherings of the District for the purposes defined in Article V.A.4. The District Conference is required to establish District By-Laws or Standard Operating Procedures for the nominations and election of members of the District Committee, all District Officers, and for the conduct of District business. The District By-Laws/Standard Operating Procedures must be in accordance with the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws of UFMCC.
2. District Committee: The District Committee is that body elected by the District Conference to carry on the administrative affairs of the District between District Conferences in an orderly manner. All actions of the District Committee must be reported to and approved by the District Conference, except where specifically provided for in these By-Laws. This Committee shall consist of at least three (3) members, as the District Conference may determine from time to time, including the District Coordinator and members representative of clergy and laity.
 - a. Qualifications and Requirements: Members of the District Committee must be members in good standing within the Fellowship, of obvious spiritual quality and leadership, who are mature and have sound judgement and a proven record of accomplishment. Their term of office shall be two (2) years, except that of the District Coordinator.
 - b. Duties: It is the responsibility of the District Committee to propose a budget to the District Conference each year and to implement such a budget when adopted; to establish a procedure for formulating and distributing a tentative agenda for each District Conference, that agenda to be mailed to all delegates, District Officers, and congregations at least thirty (30) days prior to the Conference; to establish and make appointments to District Committees and Task Forces; to carry out the directives of the District Conference and of the General Conference as appropriate. It is also the responsibility of the District Committee to foster growth and development of new works within the District and to act upon petitions for commissioning and chartering according to the procedures established by the District Conference. The District Committee will name the Board(s) of Trustees for any property acquired by the District.
 - c. Discipline: The UFMCC cannot condone disloyalty or unbecoming conduct or dereliction of duty on the part of District Officers or members of the District Committee. Therefore, any member of the District Committee or a District Officer may be recalled from office only by the District Conference. When the District Conference is not in session, charges in writing against a District Officer or member of the District Committee, must be sent at the same time to the person charged and to the General Council; who may suspend the officer or member of the District Committee so charged until the next District Conference which shall hear and act upon the charges without appeal. The written charges must be signed by a minimum of one credentialed clergy from fifty (50) percent of the churches or ten (10) churches within the District, whichever is less, and/or by the lay delegates representing a majority of lay delegate votes of each of fifty (50) percent of the churches or ten (10) churches within the District, whichever is less. The process may be initiated by either clergy or lay delegates.

C. DISTRICT:

1. DISTRICT COORDINATOR: The District Coordinator shall be a clergy or lay person elected by a District Conference for a specified term determined by that conference. It is the duty of the District Coordinator to act as Moderator at all District Conferences, to act as the official representative of the Board of Elders in the district where the District Coordinator is elected to serve, and to see -- with the Board of Elders -- that every mission and church within his/her jurisdiction is supplied with a pastor and every study group is supplied with a worship coordinator. It shall be the right and duty of the District Coordinator to visit all local church bodies within his/her district. The District Coordinator shall also serve as Chairperson of the District Board of Home Missions.
2. OTHER DISTRICT OFFICES: All other district offices shall be determined by the individual districts. Each district must have procedures for the collection and disbursement of monies, and for the keeping of adequate records concerning their activities. All of the monies must be reported to the Board of Elders on a regular, quarterly basis.
3. DISTRICT BOARD OF HOME MISSIONS: This board shall be comprised of all persons serving as pastors, interim pastors and worship coordinators of chartered churches, missions and study groups within the District, as well as the elected representative to the Commission on the Laity. It shall be the function of this board to direct the establishment, life and growth of study groups and missions.
4. DISCIPLINE: The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches cannot condone disloyalty or unbecoming conduct on the part of its district officers and, therefore, makes the following provisions for discipline or removal:

All charges must be submitted to the District Coordinator or other district officers in written form, signed by a minimum of three (3) licensed or ordained clergy or by a majority vote of the Boards of Directors of at least three (3) local churches within that district. As soon as the officer is informed of the written charges he/she becomes inactive. The next District Conference will then review the charges and, upon majority vote of that conference, may remove the officer in question or may take other such action as they may deem appropriate. The disciplined or dismissed officer has the right of written appeal to the Board of Elders and must remain inactive until final determinations of the charges. The appeal must be presented in writing to the Board of Elders not later than thirty (30) days after the action. The decision of the Board of Elders is final.
5. Any specific matters of district approval or appeal not covered herein are left to the local district option.

3. District Officers

- a. District Coordinator: The District Coordinator shall be elected by the District Conference for a term of four (4) years and shall serve as a member of the General Council. The District shall be responsible for compensation to its District Coordinator. It shall be the duty of the District Coordinator to provide spiritual direction and guidance; to act as Moderator at all District Conferences; to represent the interests and perspectives of the District to the General Council; to represent the General Council within the District; to coordinate and administer the work of the District in achieving its purposes; and to assure, together with the District Committee, that every church within the District is supplied with a Pastor or other pastoral leadership. It shall be the right and duty of the District Coordinator, or any representative whom the District Coordinator may delegate, to visit all churches within the District. The District Coordinator shall also serve as the Chair of the District Committee. The District Coordinator in consultation with the District Committee may designate only an elected District Officer to represent the District at a General Council meeting if the District Coordinator is unable to attend.
- b. Other District Officers: In addition to the District Coordinator, as specified above, the District shall provide for at least the following officers:
 - 1.) Assistant District Coordinator: A District Conference shall elect an Assistant District Coordinator to assume the Chair at meetings of the District Conference or District Committee in the absence of the District Coordinator, or at the District Coordinator's request. The Assistant District Coordinator shall perform other duties as deemed appropriate by the District Coordinator and/or the District Committee.
 - 2.) District Clerk/Secretary: The District Clerk/Secretary shall be responsible for recording the minutes of District business meetings; for publishing and disseminating to clergy and lay delegates, District Officers and congregations tentative minutes of each District business meeting within thirty (30) days, for keeping orderly files of approved minutes and pertinent materials.
 - 3.) District Treasurer: The District Treasurer shall be responsible for the receipt and safekeeping of all funds of the District and those funds for which the District is responsible. The Treasurer shall be responsible for keeping accurate financial records and disbursing funds in accordance with procedures approved by the District Committee. The Treasurer shall prepare the quarterly financial statement, a copy of which shall be sent to all District congregations, clergy and lay delegates, District officers, and the General Council. The Treasurer shall present a financial report at each District Conference.
 - 4.) District Lay Representative: The District Lay Representative shall be elected by a majority of the lay delegates at the District Conference immediately following the General Conference. Once elected, the District Lay Representative shall be member of the District Commission on the Laity, represent the District on the UFMCC Commission on the Laity, and shall encourage an annual visit to every church within the District by a representative of the laity in accordance with the District By-Laws/ Standard Operating Procedures.
- c. Discipline: Discipline of District officers shall be in accordance with the provisions of Article V.C.2.c.
4. Reservation of Powers: Any specific matters of District approval or appeal not covered herein are left to local District option.

C. DISTRICT:

1. DISTRICT COORDINATOR: The District Coordinator shall be a clergy or lay person elected by a District Conference for a specified term determined by that conference. It is the duty of the District Coordinator to act as Moderator at all District Conferences, to act as the official representative of the Board of Elders in the district where the District Coordinator is elected to serve, and to see -- with the Board of Elders -- that every mission and church within his/her jurisdiction is supplied with a pastor and every study group is supplied with a worship coordinator. It shall be the right and duty of the District Coordinator to visit all local church bodies within his/her district. The District Coordinator shall also serve as Chairperson of the District Board of Home Missions.
2. OTHER DISTRICT OFFICES: All other district offices shall be determined by the individual districts. Each district must have procedures for the collection and disbursement of monies, and for the keeping of adequate records concerning their activities. All of the monies must be reported to the Board of Elders on a regular, quarterly basis.
3. DISTRICT BOARD OF HOME MISSIONS: This board shall be comprised of all persons serving as pastors, interim pastors and worship coordinators of chartered churches, missions and study groups within the District, as well as the elected representative to the Commission on the Laity. It shall be the function of this board to direct the establishment, life and growth of study groups and missions.
4. DISCIPLINE: The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches cannot condone disloyalty or unbecoming conduct on the part of its district officers and, therefore, makes the following provisions for discipline or removal:

All charges must be submitted to the District Coordinator or other district officers in written form, signed by a minimum of three (3) licensed or ordained clergy or by a majority vote of the Boards of Directors of at least three (3) local churches within that district. As soon as the officer is informed of the written charges he/she becomes inactive. The next District Conference will then review the charges and, upon majority vote of that conference, may remove the officer in question or may take other such action as they may deem appropriate. The disciplined or dismissed officer has the right of written appeal to the Board of Elders and must remain inactive until final determinations of the charges. The appeal must be presented in writing to the Board of Elders not later than thirty (30) days after the action. The decision of the Board of Elders is final.
5. Any specific matters of district approval or appeal not covered herein are left to the local district option.

D. Fellowship

1. Introduction: Internationally, the government of the UFMCC is vested in the General Conference, subject to the provisions of the Fellowship Articles of Incorporation, its By-Laws, or documents of legal organization. Between General Conferences, the Board of Elders and the General Council are those bodies which are authorized to provide spiritual and administrative leadership on the international Fellowship level.
2. Board of Elders: The Board of Elders of the UFMCC is that body authorized by the General Conference to serve in a pastoral role and direct the spiritual life of the Fellowship. This Board shall consist of seven (7) members, which shall be expanded to nine (9) members by the General Conference once the number of chartered churches reaches one hundred (100). For every fifty (50) additional chartered churches beyond one hundred (100), the General Conference shall expand the Board by one (1) additional member until a total of twelve (12) is reached. It is desirable that the General Conference shall elect members of the Board of Elders so that this Board is representative of the diversity of the Fellowship.
- a. Qualifications: Elders must be those individuals of obvious spiritual quality and leadership who are mature and have sound judgement and a proven record of accomplishment as members within the Fellowship.
- b. Requirements: A Nominations Committee composed of one (1) member of the laity and one (1) member of the clergy from each District elected respectively by the lay delegates and the clergy at the District Conference immediately preceding the General Conference shall receive and review any and all nominations for the position of Elder. This Committee will then present to the General Conference qualified nominees for the purpose of filling the position(s) available. Nominations may be made from the floor of General Conference. The Nominations Committee shall make its report at the first business meeting of General Conference. The nominees shall present themselves before the delegates for open questioning as determined by the Nominations Committee. The election shall be held no less than two (2) days after the nominations. The term of office for a member of the Board of Elders will be four (4) years.
- c. Duties: The primary responsibility of the Board of Elders shall be to give pastoral leadership and care to enable the Fellowship in our spiritual journey. This shall include the areas of evangelism, ecumenism, and church visitation. The Elders will serve as official representatives of the Fellowship in the areas of public and community relations. It is the responsibility of the Board of Elders to make appointments to the various Fellowship boards, commissions, committees, and institutions, subject to the approval of the General Council. The Moderator, elected by and from the Board of Elders, is the chief corporate officer of the Fellowship, and shall preside over the General Conference and the General Council. A Vice-Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer shall also be elected by and from the Board, and shall serve in those capacities on the General Council. In the case of a vacancy among the Board of Elders, occurring between General Conferences, the Board of Elders shall appoint to the position a person who meets the above mentioned qualifications subject to confirmation of the General Council. An election for the remainder of the uncompleted term of Elder shall be conducted at the next General Conference.

FELLOWSHIP:

1. ELDERS: The Board of Elders of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is that body authorized by the General Conference to carry on the administrative affairs of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches between General Conferences in an orderly manner. This board shall consist of seven (7) members, which shall be expanded to nine (9) members by the General Conference once the number of chartered churches reaches one hundred (100). It is desirable that the General Conference shall elect members of the Board of Elders so that this board is geographically representative of the Fellowship.

a. QUALIFICATIONS: Elders must be those individuals of obvious spiritual quality and leadership who are mature and have sound judgement and a proven record of accomplishment within the Fellowship.

b. REQUIREMENTS: A Nominations Committee composed of one lay person and one clergyperson from each District elected respectively by the lay delegates and clergy at the District Conference immediately preceding the General Conference shall receive and review any and all nominations for the position of Elder. This committee will then present to the General Conference qualified nominees for the purpose of filling the position(s) available. Nominations may be made from the floor of General Conference. The Nominations Committee shall make its report at the first business meeting of General Conference. The nominees shall present themselves before the delegates for open questioning as determined by the Nominations Committee. The election shall be held no less than two (2) days after the nominations. The term of office for a member of the Board of Elders will be four (4) years.

c. DUTIES: It is the responsibility of the Board of Elders to establish and make appointments to the various Fellowship boards, commissions, committees and institutions. The Board is also empowered to collect and disburse funds for the advancement and growth of this church. In addition, this Board is charged to carry out all directives of the General Conference. All actions of this Board must be reported to, and approved by, each General Conference except where specifically provided for in these By-Laws.

When church bodies or members of the Fellowship raise a question of interpretation of the By-Laws, by official action the Board of Elders - as the administrative body of the Fellowship - is authorized to issue an advisory interpretation of the By-Laws for that situation.

The Moderator is elected by and from the Board of Elders and is the chief administrative officer of the Fellowship. He/She shall also preside over the General Conference. A Vice-Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer shall also be elected by and from the Board. In case of a vacancy, the Board may fill such position for the remainder of the term by the appointment of a qualified person who meets the above-stated requirements. Such persons must be specifically approved by the next General Conference.

d. DISCIPLINE: The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches cannot condone disloyalty or unbecoming conduct on the part of its elders, and, therefore, makes the following provisions for discipline or removal:

All charges against an elder must be submitted in written form, signed by a minimum of ten (10) ordained ministers, and by the Boards of Directors of ten (10) chartered churches and may be initiated by either the clergy or Board of Directors. The Board of Elders will then review the charges, and, upon majority vote of the full Board, may remove the elder or take other such action as they may deem appropriate. The elder must be given written notice of the charges, and at that time becomes inactive but has the right to appear on his/her behalf before the Board of Elders. The only appeal from the decision of the Board of Elders will be to the General Conference of the Fellowship, and written notice of such appeal must be filed with the Clerk of the Board of Elders within thirty (30) days.

2. FELLOWSHIP BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES AND INSTITUTIONS: the following must be standing committees of this Fellowship: The Clergy Credentials and Concerns Committee; the Fellowship By-Laws Committee; and The Commission on Fellowship, Faith and Order.

All Fellowship Boards, Commissions, Committees and Institutions must be called into existence by either the General Conference or the Board of Elders. All groups are responsible to, and operate under, the direction of the Board of Elders and, therefore, are also accountable to the General Conference.

d. Discipline: The UFMCC cannot condone disloyalty, unbecoming conduct, or dereliction of duty on the part of its Elders, and therefore, makes the following provisions for discipline or removal. All charges against an Elder must be submitted to the Board of Elders in written form signed by a minimum of one (1) member of the clergy from each of ten (10) different churches and by the lay delegates representing the majority of the lay delegate votes from each of ten (10) different churches and may be initiated by either the clergy or the lay delegates. The Elder must be given written notice of the charges, and at that time becomes inactive and if salaried, remains fully compensated until final disposition of these charges. The Elder has the right to appear and present their own defense before the Board of Elders on their own behalf. The Board of Elders will then review the charges, and, upon majority vote of the full Board, may remove the Elder or take other such action as it may deem appropriate. The only appeal from the decision of the Board of Elders will be to the General Conference of the Fellowship, and written notice of such appeal must be filed with the Clerk of the Board of Elders within thirty (30) days.

3. General Council: The General Council of the UFMCC is that body authorized by the General Conference to carry on the administrative affairs of the UFMCC between General Conferences in an orderly manner and is composed of the Board of Elders and all District Coordinators.

a. Duties: It shall be the responsibility of the General Council to approve the establishment and the appointments to the various Fellowship boards, commissions, committees, and institutions. The General Council is also empowered to collect and disburse funds for the advancement and growth of the UFMCC. In addition, the Council is charged to carry out all directives of the General Conference. All actions of this Council must be reported to, and approved by, each General Conference except where specifically provided for in these By-Laws. When church bodies or members of the Fellowship raise a question of interpretation of the By-Laws, by official action the General Council as an administrative body of the Fellowship is authorized to issue an advisory interpretation of the By-Laws for that situation.

b. Discipline: The discipline for members of the General Council is defined for Elders in Article V.D.2.d. and for District Coordinators in Article V.C.2.c.

4. Fellowship Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Institutions: The following must be standing boards, committees, or commissions of this Fellowship: the Clergy Credentials and Concerns Committee; the Fellowship By-Laws Committee; the Commission on the Laity; the Commission on Faith, Fellowship, and Order; and the Board of Pensions. All Fellowship boards, committees, commissions, and institutions must be called into existence by either the General Conference or the General Council. All groups are responsible to, and operate under, the General Council, and are also accountable to the General Conference.

FELLOWSHIP:

1. **ELDERS:** The Board of Elders of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is that body authorized by the General Conference to carry on the administrative affairs of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches between General Conferences in an orderly manner. This board shall consist of seven (7) members, which shall be expanded to nine (9) members by the General Conference once the number of chartered churches reaches one hundred (100). It is desirable that the General Conference shall elect members of the Board of Elders so that this board is geographically representative of the Fellowship.

a. **QUALIFICATIONS:** Elders must be those individuals of obvious spiritual quality and leadership who are mature and have sound judgement and a proven record of accomplishment within the Fellowship.

b. **REQUIREMENTS:** A Nominations Committee composed of one lay person and one clergyperson from each District elected respectively by the lay delegates and clergy at the District Conference immediately preceding the General Conference shall receive and review any and all nominations for the position of Elder. This committee will then present to the General Conference qualified nominees for the purpose of filling the position(s) available. Nominations may be made from the floor of General Conference. The Nominations Committee shall make its report at the first business meeting of General Conference. The nominees shall present themselves before the delegates for open questioning as determined by the Nominations Committee. The election shall be held no less than two (2) days after the nominations. The term of office for a member of the Board of Elders will be four (4) years.

c. **DUTIES:** It is the responsibility of the Board of Elders to establish and make appointments to the various Fellowship boards, commissions, committees and institutions. The Board is also empowered to collect and disburse funds for the advancement and growth of this church. In addition, this Board is charged to carry out all directives of the General Conference. All actions of this Board must be reported to, and approved by, each General Conference except where specifically provided for in these By-Laws.

When church bodies or members of the Fellowship raise a question of interpretation of the By-Laws, by official action the Board of Elders — as the administrative body of the Fellowship — is authorized to issue an advisory interpretation of the By-Laws for that situation.

The Moderator is elected by and from the Board of Elders and is the chief administrative officer of the Fellowship. He/She shall also preside over the General Conference. A Vice-Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer shall also be elected by and from the Board. In case of a vacancy, the Board may fill such position for the remainder of the term by the appointment of a qualified person who meets the above-stated requirements. Such persons must be specifically approved by the next General Conference.

d. **DISCIPLINE:** The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches cannot condone disloyalty or unbecoming conduct on the part of its elders, and, therefore, makes the following provisions for discipline or removal:

All charges against an elder must be submitted in written form, signed by a minimum of ten (10) ordained ministers, and by the Boards of Directors of ten (10) chartered churches and may be initiated by either the clergy or Board of Directors. The Board of Elders will then review the charges, and, upon majority vote of the full Board, may remove the elder or take other such action as they may deem appropriate. The elder must be given written notice of the charges, and at that time becomes inactive but has the right to appear on his/her behalf before the Board of Elders. The only appeal from the decision of the Board of Elders will be to the General Conference of the Fellowship, and written notice of such appeal must be filed with the Clerk of the Board of Elders within thirty (30) days.

2. **FELLOWSHIP BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES AND INSTITUTIONS:** the following must be standing committees of this Fellowship: The Clergy Credentials and Concerns Committee; the Fellowship By-Laws Committee; and The Commission on Fellowship, Faith and Order.

All Fellowship Boards, Commissions, Committees and Institutions must be called into existence by either the General Conference or the Board of Elders. All groups are responsible to, and operate under, the direction of the Board of Elders and, therefore, are also accountable to the General Conference.

5. World Church Extension

- a. The Board of World Church Extension shall develop and direct an outreach of the UFMCC in response to interested persons throughout the world.
- b. The Board of World Church Extension shall consist of the World Church Extension Elder who shall moderate the Board of World Church Extension and be responsible for the management of the UFMCC program of world church extension, and those persons appointed by the Board of Elders as Coordinators of Church Extension over geographical areas and jurisdictions for terms specified in World Church Extension policy. Coordinators of Church Extension shall be responsible for the implementation of World Church Extension programs and policies and shall be accountable to the World Church Extension Elder. The Board of World Church Extension shall report regularly to the General Council and the General Conference which must approve the Board's actions and policies.
- c. When sufficient interest and support exists, the Board of World Church Extension may approve church bodies in accordance with Article VI in these By-Laws.
- d. A church within a World Church Extension area or jurisdiction may designate any elected lay delegate to vote by proxy at the General Conference in accordance with provisions determined by the Board of World Church Extension. Representation to the UFMCC commissions, boards, committees, or task forces shall be by appointment of the World Church Extension Elder subject to the approval of the General Council.
- e. When a sufficient number of churches (as determined by the General Council and World Church Extension policy) within a geographical area or jurisdiction have demonstrated a willingness to work together and have shown the spiritual maturity and financial stability to carry out a collective ministry, such groups may apply to the Board of World Church Extension and the General Council to be recognized as a District within the UFMCC. Such application must specifically show the churches' ability to 1.) compensate a District Coordinator, 2.) furnish transportation and expenses of that District Coordinator to meetings of the General Council and General Conference, and 3.) carry on the work of a District as defined in Article V.C. of these By-Laws.
- f. Tithes, assessments, and other funds from churches within a World Church Extension area or jurisdiction shall be maintained in an account within the national boundaries of those churches, and managed in compliance with national laws. Such funds shall be under the direction of the Coordinator of Church Extension, subject to approval of the World Church Extension Elder and Board of World Church Extension. Funds remitted to the General Council for World Church Extension shall be under the jurisdiction of the World Church Extension Elder and the Board of World Church Extension.

D. THE BOARD OF WORLD CHURCH EXTENSION shall be composed of those appointed by the Board of Elders as Coordinators of Church Extension. This board shall be responsible to the General Conference and to the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall be responsible for establishing the procedures for World Church Extension. The Board of World Church Extension shall be directed by the Board of Elders to continue to develop an outreach in response to interested groups throughout the world. When these groups request recognition to become a part of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches the Board of Elders will have the right to grant permission to these groups to change these By-Laws if they are in direct violation of their national laws.

ARTICLE VI - NEW AND SPECIAL WORKS, AND VOTING CHURCH BODIES

A. Introduction

1. Within the UFMCC, all church bodies are referred to as churches.
2. The District Committee/Board of World Church Extension shall establish procedures and standards for admission of new works, commissioning, and chartering of churches, subject to the approval of the General Council.
3. The District Committee/Board of World Church Extension commissions and is responsible for special works within their jurisdiction.

B. Voting Church Bodies

1. Commissioned Churches: In order for a new work to be commissioned by the UFMCC, the new work must, by petition to the appropriate District or Board of World Church Extension, show a pledged commitment to: 1.) uphold the statement of faith and the By-Laws of the UFMCC, 2.) actively support the work of the local church over the next year, 3.) provide adequate financial support to carry out the work of the church over the next year, and 4.) insure that those people signing the petition have a record of attendance at organizational meetings. The petition, to be submitted to the District Coordinator/Coordinator of Church Extension must provide a list of stated goals of the local church for the next year in worship, congregational care, evangelism, education, and stewardship. When the District Committee/Board of World Church Extension finds that the petition pledges an acceptable level of commitment and support, the District Committee/Board of World Church Extension may commission the church for a period of up to one year, renewable by the District Committee/Board of World Church Extension. Successive annual petitions for renewal should give evidence of continued growth and progress toward chartering.
2. Chartered Churches: When a commissioned church has a stable membership which demonstrates: 1.) a pledged commitment to uphold the statement of faith and the By-Laws of the UFMCC, 2.) a willingness and ability to support a full-time Pastor, 3.) a willingness to provide to the limit of its ability for the expenses of its Pastor and lay delegate(s) to District and General Conferences, and 4.) plans for continuing work and growth in the areas of worship, congregational care, evangelism, education, and stewardship, the District Committee/Board of World Church Extension shall review the church's petition and records and may request the General Council to issue a charter. Any exception to the support of Pastor/lay delegate expenses must be approved in advance by the District Committee/Board of World Church Extension. The District Committee/Board of World Church Extension may recommend further action by the church before recommending a charter. If the District Committee/Board of World Church Extension recommends a charter, it shall also recommend an effective date of that charter. The District Committee/World Church Extension Elder may require that the District Committee/Board of World Church Extension review all charters at least once every five (5) years and may develop standards by which charters may be maintained.

ARTICLE VI APPROVAL OF LOCAL CHURCH BODIES

To become affiliated with the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches the following procedures are set forth:

A. **STUDY GROUP:** If a group of individuals is interested in associating with the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches it is to contact the Coordinator of their district or proper Fellowship board. The District Coordinator will then be in contact with the District Board of Home Missions which must concur with him/her in order to authorize a study group. If approved, a worship coordinator will be appointed by the District Coordinator and the Board of Elders will be officially notified of this action.

B. **MISSION:** After functioning as a study group for at least three (3) months a group may petition the District Coordinator — or the proper Fellowship board — to be officially recognized as a mission. They must certify in their petition that at least twenty-five (25) persons are members in good standing of the Study Group and that they are receiving adequate financial support to maintain the work of a mission; and they must maintain this minimum level of membership to maintain their mission status. The District Coordinator will confer with the District Board of Home Missions or the proper Fellowship board and, along with the Board of Elders, will decide on the petition of the group. If the recognition is granted the mission will then appoint as interim pastor a clergyperson of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Their selection must be approved by the District Coordinator and the District Board of Home Missions or proper Fellowship board. After two (2) years as a Study Group, the Board of Home Missions or proper Fellowship board may determine that a Study Group in an area of limited numerical potential may also petition the Board of Home Missions or proper Fellowship board for mission status.

It shall be the responsibility of the membership to elect yearly a clerk, treasurer, other officers as needed, and a delegate for District and General Conferences. The interim pastor and officers, acting as an Interim Board of Directors, shall exercise the provisions of Article VII (Church Membership) of these By-Laws. The provisions of this paragraph and their exercise must be approved by the District Coordinator and the Board of Home Missions or proper Fellowship board.

C. **CHURCH:** The mission may petition the District Coordinator or proper Fellowship board for chartering as a church in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches after three (3) months. They must certify in their petition that at least thirty-five (35) persons are members in good standing of the Mission and that they are financially able to support a full time pastor and a program of church activities; and they must maintain this minimum level of membership to maintain their charter. The District Coordinator will then confer with the District Board of Home Missions or the proper Fellowship board and, along with the Board of Elders, will decide upon the chartering. If chartering is granted the new church will then elect a licensed or ordained clergyperson of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches to serve as their pastor.

D. **THE BOARD OF WORLD CHURCH EXTENSION** shall be composed of those appointed by the Board of Elders as Coordinators of Church Extension. This board shall be responsible to the General Conference and to the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall be responsible for establishing the procedures for World Church Extension. The Board of World Church Extension shall be directed by the Board of Elders to continue to develop an outreach in response to interested groups throughout the world. When these groups request recognition to become a part of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches the Board of Elders will have the right to grant permission to these groups to change these By-Laws if they are in direct violation of their national laws.

E. **OTHER:** Independently organized Christian bodies, as well as previously-affiliated church groups, who desire affiliation with the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches are to apply to their District Coordinator or proper Fellowship board by petition giving full details of their history, activities, organization and financial responsibility. After consultation with the District Board of Home Missions and the Board of Elders, and with their approval, the District Coordinator or the proper Fellowship board may accept such groups either as a study group or as a mission. Thereafter, they must meet the qualifications of these By-Laws.

F. **DISCIPLINE:** If any local church body [mission or church] shall fail to abide by the Articles of Incorporation or these By-Laws, or refuses to participate in the General Conference of the Fellowship, the Board of Elders shall take appropriate action to require compliance and participation. The Board of Elders shall report any such action to the next meeting of the General Conference which shall have the power to withdraw the recognition of missions, revoke the charter of churches, or take other appropriate action.

Study groups failing to comply with the Articles of Incorporation or the By-Laws of the Fellowship may be dissolved by the proper Fellowship board or the District Coordinator with the approval of the District Board of Home

Missions. Such action must be reported to the Board of Elders and entered into the minutes of the next General Conference.

G. **CHURCH PROPERTIES:** The Boards of Directors of the local congregations of this fellowship will act as the Boards of Trustees for any property purchased by said groups. The Board of Directors and the members of each local congregation will have sole control of said property except under the following circumstances: 1) if the property is abandoned, 2) if the local church is disbanded by action of the local Board of Directors and the District Board of Home Missions. Should any of the above circumstances exist said property will revert to use of the General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches which will decide the disposition of the said property.

Local church bodies which are now incorporated or which become incorporated as non-profit corporations under their state laws shall be required to name the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches as the successor 501 (C) (3) corporation designated to receive that church's property, in the event of the dissolution or abandonment of that incorporated local church body.

539 ARTICLE IX - CHURCH MEETINGS

- 540 A. Fellowship: For the purpose of the transaction of business the
 541 UFMCC will hold a Biennial General Conference beginning in
 542 1977. The time and place of this conference will preferably
 543 be determined and announced at the previous General Conference.
 544 Notice must be given in writing to all church bodies ninety (90)
 545 days prior to the upcoming General Conference. This General
 546 Conference of the UFMCC is that body consisting of credentialled
 547 clergy, elders, District Coordinators, and lay delegates. The
 548 transaction of all business except procedural matters must be
 549 approved by a separate majority vote of the votes carried by lay
 550 delegates, lay elders, and lay District Coordinators, and a
 551 separate majority vote of the credentialled clergy. A quorum
 552 shall consist of a number of lay delegates required to achieve
 553 sixty-six percent (66%) of the votes as carried by the total
 554 number of lay delegates eligible to attend from church within
 555 the UFMCC and sixty-six percent (66%) of the credentialled clergy
 556 of the UFMCC. No proxy and/or absentee ballots shall be allowed
 557 in any business session of this Fellowship; inclusive of
 558 General Conference, district business meetings, and local
 559 congregational meetings, except where specifically provided
 560 for in these By-Laws. All special conferences of the UFMCC can
 561 only be called by a petition submitted to the Board of Elders by
 562 fifty percent (50%) of the credentialled clergy of the UFMCC and
 563 by the lay delegates carrying fifty percent (50%) of the lay
 564 votes eligible to be cast at a General Conference. Initiation
 565 of this petition may be by either the clergy or lay delegates.
 566 Such special conferences shall be governed by the same rules as
 567 those pertaining to the General Conference with the exception that
 568 written notice must be sent to all credentialled clergy and to
 569 all voting church bodies at least thirty (30) days prior to the
 570 special conference. The nature and purpose of special conferences
 571 must be stated in the petition and notices and must be written
 572 into the agenda of the special conference.
- 573 B. Districts: Between General Conferences, District Conferences must
 574 be held at least once, but no more than twice, yearly. A District
 575 Conference is that legislative meeting of all church bodies within
 576 the boundaries of the District. The boundaries of the District
 577 are established by the General Council. Thirty (30) days written
 578 notice of any District Conference must be sent to all church bodies
 579 within the District. Voting rights at these conferences shall be
 580 determined in the same manner as for the General Conference. A
 581 District Conference quorum shall consist of fifty-five percent
 582 (55%) of all credentialled clergy and the number of lay delegates
 583 required to achieve fifty-five percent (55%) of the votes as carried
 584 by all lay delegates eligible to vote in the District Conference.
 585 Special conferences of the various Districts of the UFMCC can be
 586 called by petition submitted to the District Coordinator by fifty
 587 percent (50%) of the credentialled clergy and by lay delegates
 588 carrying fifty percent (50%) of the lay votes eligible to be cast
 589 at that District Conference. The process may be initiated by either
 590 the clergy or lay delegates. Such special conferences shall be
 591 governed by the same rules as those pertaining to the regularly
 592 scheduled District Conferences. The nature and purpose of special
 593 conferences must be stated in the petition and notices and the
 594 agenda must be limited to the purpose. Special conferences may
 595 also be called at the District level or by other means as provided
 596 for in the District's By-Laws or Standard Operating Procedures.

ARTICLE IX CHURCH MEETINGS

A. FELLOWSHIP: For the purpose of the transaction of business the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches will hold a Biennial General Conference beginning in 1977. The time and place of this conference will preferably be determined and announced at the previous General Conference. Notice must be given in writing to all churches and missions ninety (90) days prior to the upcoming General Conference. This General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is that body consisting of all licensed clergy, ordained clergy, elders and lay delegates. Each local church must elect one lay delegate for each one hundred (100) members or portion thereof, that it carries on its roll of members in good standing, and each mission must elect one lay delegate, and each study group may send one official observer with voice but no vote. The transaction of all business except procedural matters must be approved by a separate majority vote of the lay delegates and a separate majority vote of the licensed clergy, ordained clergy and elders. A quorum shall consist of a number of lay delegates equal to at least sixty-six percent (66%) of the total number of lay delegates eligible to attend from churches within the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches and sixty-six percent (66%) of the clergy delegates to the General Conference. No proxy and/or absentee ballots shall be allowed in any business session of this Fellowship; inclusive of General Conference, district business meetings, and local congregational meetings.

All special conferences of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches can only be called by a petition submitted to the Board of Elders by fifty percent (50%) of the ordained clergy and licensed clergy of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches and by fifty percent (50%) of the Boards of Directors of local churches and may be initiated by either the clergy or Boards of Directors. Such special conferences shall be governed by the same rules as those pertaining to the General Conference with the exception that written notice must be sent to all licensed and ordained clergy and to all missions and churches at least thirty (30) days prior to the special conference. The nature and purpose of special conferences must be stated in the petition and notices and must be written into the agenda of the special conference.

B. DISTRICT: Between General Conferences District Conferences must be held at least once, but no more than three times, yearly. A District Conference is that meeting of all study groups, missions and local churches within a geographical area as defined by the Board of Elders. Changes in the district boundaries must be specially approved by the next General Conference. Thirty (30) days written notice of any conference must be sent to all study groups, missions and churches. Voting rights at these conferences shall be determined in the same manner as for the General Conference except that missions shall be allowed one clergy vote and one lay delegate vote. All resolutions must be passed by a majority vote. A District Conference quorum shall consist of no less than fifty-five percent (55%) of all clergy and elected lay delegates. All resolutions passed at District Conferences are advisory only to study groups, missions and churches of that district.

All special conferences of the various districts of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches can be called by petition submitted to the District Coordinator by fifty percent (50%) of the ordained and licensed clergy of that district and by fifty percent (50%) of the Boards of Directors of the district missions and churches and may be initiated by either the clergy or Boards of Directors. Such special conferences shall be governed by the same rules as those pertaining to the regularly scheduled District Conferences. The nature and purpose of special conferences must be stated in the petition and notices and must be written into the agenda of the special conference. Special conferences may also be called at the district level by the District Coordinator or by other means as provided for in the district By-Laws if such exist.

597 ARTICLE X - CHURCH FINANCES

- 598 A. The UFMCC adopts and teaches tithing as the scripturally affirmed
599 means of supporting the Church and its ministries, and as the ex-
600 pression of good stewardship of time, skills, and money by indiv-
601 uals and church bodies. Therefore, it shall be the responsibility
602 of both the clergy and the lay leadership of local churches to plan
603 and implement programs of stewardship both to help persons grow
604 in the grace of giving and to fund the Church's ministries. An
605 offering shall be received at each service of public worship in
606 the local church, District Conference, and General Conference.
- 607 B. The Board of Directors/local church administrative body shall report
608 all church receipts each month to the UFMCC and the District, and
609 with that report shall remit five percent (5%) of the funds reported
610 to the District and ten percent (10%) of the funds reported to the
611 UFMCC. Only bequests, building funds, or funds to meet the immediate
612 needs of persons in distress shall be omitted in calculating the
613 amount due the Fellowship and District. The General Conference
614 shall determine what constitutes a building fund. A gift of money
615 given in lieu of goods in kind to a church outside of the United
616 States would not be included in funds to be reported. Report and
617 remittance are due on or before the tenth (10th) day of the month
618 following the month being reported.
- 619 C. Any bank or financial account in the name of any church body,
620 District, or of the UFMCC, or of any subordinate group or body,
621 must require two (2) signatures for withdrawals, one of which must
622 be that of an officer elected or a person appointed under UFMCC
623 By-Laws.

ARTICLE X
CHURCH FINANCES

- A. LOCAL OFFERINGS: At any service of public worship of the local church body an offering shall be received for the church and banked under the direction of the church treasurer.
- B. CONFERENCE OFFERINGS: At the meeting of any District Conference or at any General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches special offerings may be received to help in the work of that district or the Fellowship.
- C. FELLOWSHIP SUPPORT: Each study group, mission and church will, on a monthly basis, contribute a minimum of ten percent (10%) of all collected monetary tithes and offerings to the Board of Elders of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches for the administrative expenses of the Fellowship. The only designated funds that are not titheable are the building fund, specified bequests and grants, and deacons fund. A gift of money given in lieu of goods in kind to a church outside of the United States of America would not be included in funds to be reported.
- D. AREA OUTREACH SUPPORT: Each study group, mission and church shall, on a monthly basis, contribute a minimum of two percent (2%) of all collected monetary tithes and offerings to their district (or Fellowship Board) to help expand the Christian outreach of this church. The guidelines for reporting and tithing are the same as for Fellowship support as outlined in Article X. C. above.

RATIONALE:

This proposal from the GSS Commission combines new concepts and ideas which we believe will continue to enable ministry in the UFMCC. This document contains some broad conceptual changes and some minor changes which we would like to address in the following rationale. It is our sincere wish that this facilitate your understanding and appreciation of this work.

A. Areas of Conceptual Change:

1. The need for change of our Fellowship's structure grows out of our need to keep in step with the moving of the Holy Spirit.
2. These changes are a part of a process. This proposal is not written in stone; it is an attempt to help us continue our journey.
3. This document does not guarantee the success of our system, but we believe it is filled with potential for growth, change, and ministry.

B. Three Areas of Church Life Affected by this Document:

1. The local local church structure proposed in this work is a response for structural adaptability to the specific needs of each community.
2. The proposed District structure is strengthened as a response to the need for government to enable our ministry. Individual local churches may have limited resources for ministry outside their immediate locales, but working together, with other churches, their resources are multiplied. As these local churches meet together in Districts to plan and implement common objectives in ministry, there is need for these meetings to have legislative power so that the group can move together as a whole to further enhance the entire ministry of the UFMCC.
3. The changes proposed by this work in the international structure which connects us are made in response to the need to enable our global vision of ministry.

C. Further Explanation of Specific Terms: This section has been developed for the purpose of further clarification. In no way is this section a formal part of the By-Laws Proposals, binding in nature, nor does it deal with every point of change.

1. Line #72 - The "Coordinator of Church Extension" applies to the person appointed by the Board of Elders to coordinate a World Church Extension area that is not yet a district.
2. Line #102 - The "Local Church Administrative Body" provides for various forms of local administration to function in the place of the Board of Directors as long as the guidelines of Article V.B.3. are followed.
3. Line #163 - This voting procedure was developed to provide for a more equitable representation from the local church to both the District and Fellowship levels. NOTE: Voting church bodies are NOT required to have more than one (1) delegate per one hundred (100) members in good standing.
4. Line #212 - Legislative powers of the District were developed to empower the grass roots ministries that are most effectively enacted at the District level.
5. Line #220 - With the legislative empowering of the District, the District Committee will serve as the administrative body between District Conferences similar to the Board of Directors/local church administrative body on the local level. Size and membership of this committee above the stated minimum will be left to District option. The District Committee functions to direct the establishment, life, and growth of church bodies within the District.
6. Line #408 - The "General Council" was designed to further more equitable representation and develop more grass roots feed in and leadership on the Fellowship level.
7. Line #491 - "Commissioned and Chartered Churches" were developed so that all worshipping bodies would be called churches. The period of commissioning is designed to enable growth in maturity and responsibility.

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL

I. Proposed Tithe and Assessments Allocations

- A. Ten Percent (10%) Receipts to the UFMCC
 1. Using the newly instituted accounting systems, cost center data was supplied by the Fellowship for the five months of June - October, 1984. The GSS Commission evaluated these figures and determined that it would be ill-advised to lower the current allocation of ten percent (10%) to the Fellowship at this time. A one percent (1%) reduction of this allocation would represent an annual decrease of approximately \$40,000 to \$50,000, or ten percent (10%) of the income.
 2. It was the determination of the commission that until the following situations are adequately addressed the percentage of ten (10) should not be altered:
 - a. perpetual cash flow problems due to the habitual lateness and non-payment of tithes by member churches.
 - b. insufficient cost center data received
 - 1.) only five months of data
 - 2.) more clear and concise breakdown of cost centers is needed
 - 3.) lack of program-focused budget construction (i.e., priorities of programs, unified budget, "Band-Aid" approach to funding)
 - B. Five Percent (5%) Receipts to the Districts
 1. It is the determination of this commission that five percent (5%) is the minimal level at this time to finance the ministry and mission of the District.
 - a. Approximately 65% of our Fellowship's churches are currently giving at least a minimum of 5% to the ministry of their Districts.
 - b. In Districts where congregations have voluntarily raised their assessments to 5% or more, growth, maturity, stability, and outreach have been evident.
 - c. Districts will be insured of input and representation at all levels of our Fellowship's life.
 - d. The commission recognizes that the 5% assessment is a creative response that reflects the reality of present practice within the Fellowship.
 - C. We urge that the cost center accounting summary, begun in 1984, continue throughout the 1985-87 bienium for re-evaluation in 1987 by the Finance Committee and the General Council. It may be feasible that an alternate breakdown of the total church allocations may be possible at a future time.
- II. Funding of the General Council
 - A. Districts will fund transportation of their District Coordinators through a transportation pool.
 - B. Districts outside the U.S.A. shall fund the transportation of their District Coordinators and may use monies collected from the 10% UFMCC tithe collected and maintained within their respective national boundaries (Article V.D.5.f.) through the transportation pool.
 - C. Cost effectiveness may dictate that General Council meetings be held as close to our Fellowship offices as possible.
 - D. In the interest of insuring attendance and equal representation for all the Districts of the Fellowship; and in order to share the financial implications in an equal way, the transportation pool was developed so that each District will be charged equal amounts to provide for the total transportation costs.
 - E. The UFMCC General fund shall finance the participation of the Elders, the overall administration of the General Council, and the lodging and per diem for the members of the Council at meetings of the General Council.
 - F. Frequency of meetings:
 1. 1985 - one organizational meeting
 2. beginning 1986 - anticipate two meetings a year
 - G. Compensation for Elders shall be determined by job description which shall include program direction, functional needs, and budgetary considerations.

SCHEDULE OF IMPLEMENTATION:

Our implementation schedule is based on local, District, and Fellowship initiative and options. Dates are given as the final time for implementation, and may be implemented earlier where indicated. We have also taken into consideration that in some areas, we are already moving in the direction this document is codifying.

Article V - Government, Organization, and Officers

- A. Government - Begin implementation immediately, to go into effect by January 1, 1986
- B. Local Commissioned and Chartered Churches - Begin implementation at the next scheduled District Conference, will go into effect in each District by its determination, with approval of the General Council; must be completed by June 1, 1987
- C. Districts
 - 1. Introduction - Go into effect at next scheduled District Conference, except for District By-Laws or Standard Operating Procedures which must be completed and approved by June 1, 1987
 - 2. District Committee - Established at next Scheduled District Conference
 - 3. District Officers - Begin implementation at next scheduled District Conference. Election to be held as current terms of office expire. Any new offices not already existing in any given District should come into existence at a time determined by the District with final implementation completed by June 1, 1987.
- D. Fellowship - Begin implementation immediately, to go into effect by January 1, 1986, with the exception of World Church Extension which shall be determined by the General Council with final implementation by June 1, 1987

Article VI - New and Special Works, and Voting Church Bodies

Begin implementation at the next scheduled District Conference; will go into effect in each District by its determination with approval of the General Council; must be completed by June 1, 1987

Article IX - Church Meetings

Go into effect at next scheduled District Conference

Article X - Church Finances

To go into effect August 1, 1985, with assessments due on or before September 10, 1985, and continuing thereafter. (Each local church body may wish to do advance budget planning to accommodate any proposed changes.)

FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT, STRUCTURES, AND SYSTEMS COMMISSION

With the submission of this report, GSS finds that the task assigned to it by General Conference has been completed. It is the recommendation of GSS that the forum for future structural changes be the General Council or District Committees/Board of World Church Extension for consideration and action by General or District Conferences.

General Conference always retains the right to reconstitute GSS at some future date in the event that it is determined to be necessary.

A budget proposal has been submitted because of the procedural requirement for funding in the event that General Conference determines for any reason GSS needs to convene during the 1985-1987 period.



